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AUTHOR	Block, Alan A.
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ABSTRACT

This book explores the construction of the idea of the child as a product of adult needs and school as a place where children may be confined until they are considered socially useful. Drawing parallels with folk singer Bob Dylan's song, "It's All Right, Ma, I'm Only Bleeding," the book argues that the United States' educational system practices a psychological violence on children, by means of structure and curriculum that quash children's natural curiosity and penchant for learning. The book uses a paradigm steeped in object relationship theory and its resulting psychoanalytic practice and in recent research in the burgeoning field of neuroscience to examine the growth of the child's psychological self, and portrays the destructive effects that the idea and practice of schools and curriculum have on that development. A drastic reconceptualization of the very purposes for which education is organized is called for, and subsequently a reconceptualization of the children who are the objects of education. Based on Thoreau's writings, the book suggests that education should not be a discipline, a movement progressively along a path cut and defined by others and by which our position along that path defines us. Rather, education should be a willful and conscious getting lost, in the sense of Thoreau's walk, whereby the learner creates the path, and engagement in the experience alters forever the manner in which the world is perceived. In this sense, curriculum should be concerned with promoting education as exploration, in which activity production is not only of an artistic creation but of an artist as well. The book concludes by noting that, as in Dylan's song, health occurs in creativity, and that until we create an environment in which the child may use the educational establishment to create him or her self, until we serve only as a frame on which the canvas may appear in paint, we will continue practicing violence upon the child, denying him or her growth, health, and experience. (HTH)

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